

TECHNICAL CLIMBS ON MOUNT KENYA

There are two major technical rock and ice climbing routes on Mt. Kenya; the Normal South East face route and the North face standard route.

NORMAL ROUTE

The Base of the **normal route** to Nelion and Batian is the Austrian hut. Direct approach to Austrian hut is via the Naro Moru Route but it is also easy to access from the lengthier but more interesting Sirimon or Chogoria ascent trails. Getting to Austrian hut following the Naro Moru route requires a minimum of 2 but preferably 3 days. Approaching it from Sirimon or Chogoria trails requires 3 but preferably 4 days. Descend from Austrian via the Naromoru Route can be done in a day but requires at least 2 days on Sirimon or Chogoria routes.

Approaching Nelion and Batian peaks from this route consists of different grades ranging from grade 3, 3+, 4 and 4+. Seasoned climbers with good climbing speed do this route in 1 day, while less experienced or slower climbers take 2 days, (It is always advisable to dedicate 2 days for the climb regardless of your climbing ability to caution against bad weather conditions). Those who take two days up on the peaks spend a night at the Howel hut on top of Nelion, the second highest peak. Climbers leave the Australian hut at 4 a.m., then cross the glacier and hike on scree to arrive at the base of the climb. This predawn trek takes about two hours. From the start of the climb it takes six hours to the top and three hours to abseil back down. We have fixed bolts for abseil from Nelion but from Batian you need to build your own abseil points. The rock is solid though you can expect some loose rocks in sections of the climb. There is plenty of running belays or scrambling while on rope. The route doesn't go straight up so there is a lot of zigzag both going up and coming down. It's a long climb of 23 pitches some them 50 Meters and others 60 Meters long. **N/B:** Its real mountain climbing and no friction climbing.

The climbing season for this route is between mid December to mid March when it is designated as grade IV.

THE NORTH FACE

The Base of the **North face route** to Batian is the Shiptons hut. Direct approach to Shiptons hut is via the Sirimon Route but it is also easy to access from the Naromoru or Chogoria ascent trails. Getting to Shiptons hut following the Sirimon route requires a minimum of 2 days. Approaching it from Naro Moru or Chogoria trails requires 3 but preferably 4 days. Descend from Shiptons via the Sirimon Route can be done in a day but requires at least 2 days on Naro Moru or Chogoria routes. Climbers leave Shiptons camp at 3 a.m. and have a longish hike on steep scree to the base of the climb. This takes about 2 hours. The route is grades 3, 3+, 4 and 4+. We have no bolts on this route. It's about 26 pitches some of 50 M and others 60 M long. The rock is solid but there is a lot of loose rock. As you go higher expect exposed pitches and loose rock. Climbers take one to two days depending on their climbing speed. We have no hut on this route so you need a bevy bag to sleep on the rocks. The route goes zigzag and takes about six hours to the top and four hours to abseil. There is a lot of climbing down on this route. The easy pitches are also good for scrambling while on rope.

The climbing season for this route is June to October and it takes approximately 10 hours to climb the 1,100 m of a technically grade IV slope.

SUGGESTED ITINERARY NORMAL ROUTE

6 DAYS SIRIMON-NAROMORU CROSSOVER (with rock/ice climbing)

Day 1: Pick up from Nairobi airport at 0620 Hrs for transfer to Mountain Rock Lodge for lunch. In the afternoon is a nature walk (3-4 hours) through the forest to the MauMau caves, the former hideouts for Kenya's pre-independence guerrilla fighters who fought against the British colonial masters. The escort naturalist guide for the trek talks about their history and the flora and fauna of the forest. Dinner and overnight at Mountain Rock Lodge

Day 2: Leave the lodge by 1000hrs together with your guide and porters and drive for less than two hours to Sirimon Park gate (2600m). On completion of park entry formalities, have picnic lunch then begin a 3-4 hour hike through forest. Ascend 700m bypassing the bamboo, rosewood and heather zones to Old Moses camp. The forest and bamboo are home to hundreds of buffaloes, elephants, bushbucks and a plethora of bird species. Dinner and overnight at Old Moses Camp (3300m)

Day 3: A long day leading to the base of the high peaks. Today's trek is largely through the moorlands and the Mackinder Valley, with good views of the main peaks and a brief stopover for picnic lunch. Total walking time is approx. 7 hours gaining 900m in altitude. Dinner and Overnight at Shipton's Hut (4200m)

Day 4: Pre-dawn attempt of the summit starts at 0300hrs, taking 3-4 hours to reach Pt. Lenana 4985m (the hikers summit) in time to watch the sunrise. On a clear day you can see the snow capped summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro miles away to the south. Descend back to Austrian Hut (4790m) where we spend the rest of the day preparing for technical climb of Nelion and Batian peaks.

Days 5 & 6: Start Technical climbing; - Batian and Nelion via the South Face Route. Guide's partner and guide/porters take care of left luggage at Austrian hut.

Day 7: Descend to Met Station to connect with our transfer vehicle to Nairobi.

Kenyan Technical Guides

Local technical guides who are contracted to lead climbs on Mount Kenya are attached to Mount Kenya National Park as part of the **Kenya Wildlife Service** mountain rescue team. To qualify to this position they were well trained as mountaineers and qualified by KWS to undertake rescue operations as well as lead climbs up the twin technical peaks of Nelion and Batian. Most of the guides hold diplomas in mountaineering from the National Outdoor leadership school (NOLS) of America and another diploma from Austrian rescue team. They all have over 10 years experience as a mountaineering guide with most of these years having been permanently engaged as a member of the KWS mountain rescue team.

Technical guides normally linkup with climbers at either the Austrian or Shiptons hut a day before the climb. Technical guides lead the technical climbing bit only and thus the climbers require the assistance of regular trail guides and porters to reach the technical climbing base.

Each technical guide leads a group of 3 climbers at a time for safety reasons.

Technical Climbs gear

Essential gears required for this climbs are categorised under personal climb gear and group climb gear. Each climber **must bring** along their own personal climb gear listed here while group gear listed is shared among the group of 1 to 3 persons. Group gear can be supplied by the guides on request and at no additional charge but it's always advisable for the climbers to bring as much of their own climbing gear as possibly.

Personal climb gear necessary are:

Helmet. Seat Harness. Crampons. Ice axe. Belay device of choice. Figure of eight (an abseil device). 2 Chodoretts (1 short and 1 long). 2 Locking binners. Cowtail. Light and warm sleeping bag, bevy bag, good mountain boot. Sufficient warm clothing, Rain gears. Gloves. wind breakers. Day park water bottle, protective sun cream, first aid medicine.

Group climb gear necessary are:

2 Ropes, each 60 meters in length (size 9 preferably).
12 stoppers, (preferably medium sized ones, no. 3 to 6).
At least 6 Chamalots or friends, (nos. 3 to 6).
6 Locking binners and 12 regular binners,
Minimum 6 runners, Jumas and a cleaning tool,
Enough strings or webbing. Bring 6 short and 6 long sewn ones and a several long unsown ones.